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5/11/2026

From: SMART Archive
Sent: Wed, 18 Mar 2020 21:51:17 GMT
To: SMART Core
Subject: (U) NEW YORK TIMES ARTICLE ON ALLEGED TORTURE INCIDENT

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MRN: 82 SAN SALVADOR 565
Date/DTG: Jan 25, 1982 / 250000Z Jan 82
From: AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR
Action: WASHDC, SECSTATE *ROUTINE*; ICA *ROUTINE*
E.O.: Unknown
TAGS: SHUM, SOPN, ES, US
Reference: 82 STATE 5833
Subject: (U) NEW YORK TIMES ARTICLE ON ALLEGED TORTURE INCIDENT

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ACTION ARA-16

INFO OCT-00 ADS-00 INR-10 SS-10 CIAE-00 H-01 NSCE-00
NSAE-00 SSO-00 SY-05 HA-06 L-03 PM-09 PA-01
MCT-02 INRE-00 SAL-01 SYE-00 SP-02 SPRS-02 /068 W
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O 251315Z JAN 82
FM AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7554
USICA WASHDC IMMEDIATE 094
DOD WASHDC IMMEDIATE

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E. O. 12065: GDS 1/23/88 (BLEAKLEY, KENNETH W.) OR-M
TAGS: SHUM, ES
SUBJECT: (U) NEW YORK TIMES ARTICLE ON ALLEGED TORTURE INCIDENT

REF: STATE 5833

1. (C) SUMMARY: NEW YORK TIMES PUBLISHED JAN 11, 1982 A
TOTALLY FALSE ARTICLE ALLEGING US PARTICIPATION IN A
TORTURE INCIDENT. NO ATTEMPT WAS MADE BY NYT TO VERIFY STORY
HERE. RADIO MOSCOW BEGAN PLAYING SAME TUNE ALMOST IMMEDIATELY.

Declassify in Full/Release in Full
Raymond G. McGrath, Senior Reviewer
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE
May 7, 2026

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THIS MESSAGE OUTLINES MULTIPLE FACTUAL DISCREPENCIES WHICH ARE, AND WERE, EASILY VERIFIABLE.

ACTION REQUEST: THAT WASHINGTON FOCUS WIDEST POSSIBLE ATTENTION ON THIS BLATANT EXAMPLE OF INACCURATE NEWS REPORTING ON SALVADOR AND ITS USE BY THE LEFT TO ATTEMPT TO ASSOCIATE US ASSISTANCE WITH OFFICIAL TERRORISM AND REPRESSION. END SUMMARY.

2. (U) THE EMBASSY BELIEVES THAT THE ALLEGATIONS IN THE NEW YORK TIMES ARTICLE OF JAN. 11, 1982 THAT U.S. PERSONNEL WITNESSED SO-CALLED "TORTURE CLASSES" ARE TOTALLY FALSE. FURTHERMORE, OUR INVESTIGATION HAS

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DISCOVERED SEVERAL DISCREPANCIES IN THE NEW YORK TIMES ARTICLE WHICH TEND TO CAST DOUBT ON CARLOS MONTANO'S ENTIRE ACCOUNT ON THE ALLEGED INCIDENT.

3. (C) EVEN A CURSORY READING OF THE JANUARY 11 ARTICLE RAISES TWO QUESTIONS. HOW COULD THE NYT PUBLISH SO PROMINENTLY SUCH A CONDEMNATORY ARTICLE BY A SALVADORAN ARMY DESERTER WITHOUT CHECKING OUT THE FACTS ON THE GROUND? A SECOND AND EVEN MORE SERIOUS QUESTION HAS TO DO WITH THE TIMING OF THE RELEASE OF THE STORY WHICH ITSELF IS NOT DATED. WE HAVE LEARNED THROUGH JOURNALISTS THAT A GROUP OF SALVADORAN EXILES IN MEXICO, INCLUDING DISSIDENT CHRISTIAN DEMOCRAT HECTOR DADA HIREZI AND EX-OWNER OF THE SAN SALVADOR LEFTIST DAILY EL INDEPENDIENTE, JORGE PINTO, OFFERED GOMEZ' TALE SEVERAL WEEKS BEFORE ITS JAN. 11 PUBLICATION, TO SEVERAL AMERICAN JOURNALISTS IN MEXICO CITY, NONE OF WHO WOULD TOUCH IT FOR ITS OBVIOUS LACK OF CREDIBILITY. THE NYT NOT ONLY ACCEPTED THE STORY BUT HELD IT UNTIL THE FIRST CONTINGENT OF SALVADORAN MILITARY ARRIVED FOR TRAINING IN NORTH CAROLINA. THE TIMES THEN RAN THE STORY IN AN EXTREMELY PROMINENT POSITION ON PAGE FOUR ALONG WITH A PHOTO OF THE ARRIVAL OF THE SALVADORAN MILITARY.

4. (C) WE SHOULD NOT ALSO THAT MOSCOW RADIO IN SPANISH TO LATIN AMERICAN (FBIS BY 182200) USED THE STORY THE FOLLOWING DAY, JAN 12, TO LAUNCH A PARTICULARLY VICIOUS ATTACK AGAINST THE US. IT MADE A SIMILAR LINK BETWEEN ACCUSATION OF WIDESPREAD INSTRUCTION IN TORTURE BY THE US AND THE ARRIVAL OF SALVADORAN MILITARY TRAINEES IN THE US.

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5. (U) AS FOR THE STORY ITSELF, THE FOLLOWING DISCREPANCIES
WERE CONFIRMED BY THE MILGROUP COMMANDER:

A. GOMEZ STATED THAT SOME OF THE U.S. PERSONNEL WHO
OBSERVED THE INCIDENT WERE DRESSED IN JUNGLE CAMOUFLAGE
FATIGUES. COMMENT: NO U.S. ARMY PERSONNEL HAS
CAMOUFLAGE FATIGUES IN EL SALVADOR. THEY WERE
PROHIBITED FROM THE BEGINNING.

B. GOVEZ SAID SOME WORE GREEN BERETS WHEN THEY ARRIVED
AT ILOPANGO AIRPORT. COMMENT: U.S. PERSONNEL HAVE
PROHIBITED FROM BRINGING GREEN BERETS INTO EL SALVADOR
FROM THE START. FURTHERMORE, ONLY TWO OF THE 19
PERSONNEL IN THE COUNTRY IN JANUARY 1981 WERE FROM
THE SPECIAL FORCES AND THEY DID NOT WORK AT THE AIR
BASE. THOSE AT THE ILOPANGO AIR BASE WHO WOULD HAVE
BEEN FAMILIAR TO GOMEZ WERE HELICOPTER MAINTENANCE
MEN AND PILOT TRAINERS WHO NORMALLY WORE GREEN OVERALLS
OR FLIGHT SUITS.

C. GOMEZ SAID THAT HIS PARACHUTE UNIT RECEIVED TRAINING
FROM TWO U.S. ADVISORS. COMMENT: NO U.S. TRAINERS
HAVE EVER WORKED WITH THE PARACHUTE UNIT. NOT EVEN FOR
A SHORT TIME.

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6. (U) IN ADDITION TO THE ABOVE, A SEPARATE INVESTIGATION CONDUCTED BY ABC UNCOVERED THE FOLLOWING ABOUT GOMEZ:

A. HE CLAIMS HIS PARENTS WERE MASSACRED BY THE NATIONAL GUARD IN MAY 1981. COMMENT: ACCORDING TO RELATIVES IN ZACATECOLUCA, DEPARTMENT OF LA PAZ, HIS PARENTS DIED SEPARATELY OF NATURAL CAUSES LONG BEFORE THAT DATE.
B. GOMEZ HAS NOT BEEN CONSISTENT IN DESCRIBING HIS FAMILY TO DIFFERENT REPORTERS. THE NUMBER OF BROTHERS AND SISTERS VARIES FROM INTERVIEW TO INTERVIEW.

7. (U) THE ONLY VERIFIABLE FACT IN GOMEZ' STORY THAT CHECKS OUT IS THAT HE WAS A PARATROOPER AND DESERTED AT ABOUT THE TIME HE ALLEGED. HOWEVER, HE CLAIMS TO HAVE ESCAPED FROM THE STOCKADE AT ILOPANGO WHILE MILITARY RECORDS INDICATE THAT HE SIMPLY FAILED TO RETURN FROM A 48 HOUR PASS.

8. (U) ASIDE FROM THE DISCREPANCIES IN GOMEZ' STORY, IT IS INCONCEIVABLE THAT EIGHT U.S. SERVICE MEMBERS WOULD WATCH A 13-YEAR OLD GIRL BEING TORTURED WITHOUT TAKING ACTION, OR AT THE VERY LEAST, REPORT IT TO THEIR SUPERIOR OFFICER. MORAL CONSIDERATIONS ASIDE, THEY ARE TRAINED TO REPORT SUCH INCIDENTS. THERE HAVE BEEN NO REPORTS, NOT EVEN ANY RUMORS OF SUCH AN INCIDENT.

9. (U) THIS MESSAGE, ALONG WITH THE TESTIMONY OF ALL THE INSTRUCTORS PRESENT AT THE TIME, WHICH THE DOD IS COLLECTING SHOULD PROVIDE SUFFICIENT EVIDENCE TO COUNTER THE GOMEZ' STORY, THOUGH UNFORTUNATELY THE STORY WILL REMAIN IN THE FILES OF THOSE WHO WOULD DISCREDIT AMERICAN POLICY IN EL SALVADOR. ONCE SUCH A STORY IS CIRCULATED IN A MAJOR PUBLICATION, IT ASSUMES

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A LIFE OF ITS OWN NO MATTER IF IT IS LATER PROVEN FALSE.
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